

Psychosocial and Cultural Research on Poverty in Mexico



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CIRILO HUMBERTO GARCIA CADENA
EDITOR

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Chapter 8

POVERTY AND LANGUAGE

Lidia Rodríguez Alfano¹

INTRODUCTION

Is there such a thing as a 'poor language'? Can it be described as "the speech of poor people"? The answer to both questions is "no". We cannot establish an aprioristic relationship between poverty and language, nor can we properly talk about a speech typical of low income individuals.

In Mexico, as in many underdeveloped countries, poverty is mostly related to illiteracy, and it must be accepted as someone describes the language of illiterate individuals. Some of these are set prejudices. These prejudgments come from the application of formal logic to language analysis, which leads to false conclusions about a presupposed lack of coherence in illiterate discourse. Also, false stereotypes derived from the evaluation of language based on the standard norm as the only valid paradigm. In this case, the speech styles of illiterate individuals are labeled as "incorrect" since the criteria are a comparison with written discourse prescribed as the "correct" use. In these wrong methodological procedures researchers conclude that illiterate discourse can be classified as the use of a restricted language code.

Rather than admitting such false judgments, this study accepts the following presuppositions:

- Through the process of formal education, literate people lose the best resources of oral language, while illiterate people do not.
- Regardless, illiterate people are at a disadvantage since the features of their language do not correspond to those required by the work market.
- Every analysis of discourse implies the consideration of the conditions of its production and reception. This study defines these conditions as a specific speech situation where an illiterate individual expresses personal opinions to a university

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student on the topic of "crisis", a subject that is presupposed to be known by both interlocutors, even when their backgrounds are different.

According to these presuppositions, the main objective is to gather some evidence of both, the richness kept from oral tradition and the level of disadvantage of the language used by illiterate people who lived in Monterrey from 1985 to 1986.

The analyzed data and samples were taken from a wide corpus of sociolinguistic research named "El habla de Monterrey", which can be found in the web at ([www.filosofia.uanl.mx/investigaciones/Lidia Rodríguez Alfano. Proyecto CONACYT](http://www.filosofia.uanl.mx/investigaciones/Lidia_Rodriguez_Alfano_Proyecto_CONACYT)). The reported results come from two previous studies in this research: Masters and PhD dissertations that resulted in two published books: Rodríguez Alfano:2004a, which deals with the analysis of discourse issued by 14 illiterate subjects vs. 14 university educated interviewed individuals; and Rodríguez Alfano:2004b, which studied the discourse produced by 20 illiterate vs. 40 interviewed people (20 with mid level education and 20 with superior level education). Both studies analyze arguments issued in sociolinguistic interviews where men and women of different age and sociocultural backgrounds express their opinions about the economic "crisis" that Mexico, and more specifically in Monterrey, is experiencing at the time these conversations were recorded.

These opinions answer questions such as "How is the actual economic crisis affecting you?, Who in your opinion is responsible for this situation? and, Which solutions can be applied to succeed in this situation?" Even though previous researches have analyzed opinions issued by people of different sociocultural levels, this report only considers the answers given by illiterate people.

The main objective of this report is to analyze three types of results: the image of self and other images projected in the discourse in interviews of 20 illiterate subjects studied in Rodríguez Alfano:2004b. The discursive schematization of "crisis" constructed by this group of interviewed informants at the time that they talk about this topic, the results of which were also taken from Rodríguez Alfano:2004b; and the introduction of markers of modalized discourse, verbs and pronouns produced by 14 illiterate subjects interviewed in Rodríguez Alfano:2004a.

1. IMAGINARY FORMATIONS

According to Pêcheux, the conditions where discourse is produced and received imply that, depending on the place occupied by the sender in a socioeconomic and cultural formation, he represents himself in inferior/equal/superior conditions with respect to the interlocutor. In our study milieu, the sender represents himself as "illiterate" and, therefore, "inferior" to the interviewer (a university student), and thus, with scarce authority to talk to him about *the crisis* in a wide sense, further than daily experiences.

Following the proposal of Pêcheux, and in order to make a precise identification of the image that each interviewee constructs of himself, in Rodríguez Alfano:2004b we analyze the discourse of 20 illiterate individuals and recorded their responses to a battery of questions. For the purpose of this paper, we take the reconstruction of the responses included in the aforementioned publication and which record pieces of conversation issued by those interviewed, as follows:

'How do I identify myself as an individual living the crisis?'

Response: *I am part of a group of poor people who live a very tough crisis..., as a poor what can you do..., we are just working families; although we are all poor people, some are superior than others (society is a ladder). What we resent about the crisis is that things are so expensive that we can't make ends meet, we eat meat only at birthdays, our salaries are spent in transportation and utility bills because these getting higher and higher; but we feel that if many of us work it will be easy to bear it, that's why it is important to keep our jobs; we believe that we must join together to solve the crisis, to help each other, and not be abusive or untrustworthy.*

Thus, the identification of himself as a participant in the process of *the crisis* experienced in the country and in Monterrey corresponds to the 'victim of the effects of this process'.

'Which are the needs that have caused or accentuated the situation experienced throughout the country and specially in Monterrey?'

Response: *We poor lack everything, we need fuel for the stove, we want a piece of meat, to buy a TV, a bed, but everything is too expensive, we cannot go into debt but sometimes there is no choice.*

As we can see, around the 'needs motivated or accentuated by the economic situation', the imaginary formations represent which the interviewed subject considers 'indispensable' or 'necessary': 'the price control of basic products'.

'How am I represented regarding education?'

Response: *We don't have schooling; I don't know, I can write a little; we know that those without studies work in construction and we are convinced that study is the safest way for social climbing, that is why we consider the education of our children a priority.*

Regarding education, the illiterate interviewee laments his lack of education and expresses convictions that reinforce a widely spread topos (the greater the school preparation, the better the opportunities for social climbing).

'How do I represent myself regarding my work?'

With work there is no crisis, you have to look for work willing to find it, children whose parents don't have a job go barefoot, the poor things.

Therefore, we can affirm that 'the job' is schematized by illiterate individuals as a 'indispensable condition for not living the crisis'.

'How do I represent myself regarding the government?'

We're screwed and we're screwed by the government, we are disregarded, we have been abandoned by the government, Lopez Mateos did help the poor, we need to be treated with consideration because we are very behind (in electricity payments), and we need set prices.

From this we can infer that illiterate people represent themselves as 'someone in need of direct and continuous support' since government cares only for social groups with higher income.

From the interesting data obtained from the analysis of these relations we gather that this group's discourse reinforces their image of themselves as *helpless, unprotected, disregarded,*

exploited, government-dependent and in need of its protection in the face of 'the excessive ambition of businessmen and people in general as well as abusive authorities'.

One evidence of these imaginary formations appears in the different use of *tú/usted* as Spanish solidarity versus the respectful form of address. When the age bracket and the gender of the interviewer are the same as the interviewee, the illiterate individual treats the interviewer as an equal, underlined by the use of the pronoun '*tú*' as a form of address and discursive modality strategies through which he assumes his ignorance on the object-subject of *crisis*: 'who knows', 'I don't know', 'I've heard...'. These forms of address include cultural pre-constructed formulas (Grize) that assume that among young people, woman to woman, or man to man, the '*tú*' form of address is generally used; and in modality strategies, imaginary formations related to the different social status (Pêcheux) regarding the different level of formal education in relation to the interlocutor. However, when the illiterate interviewee is in the same age bracket or older than 30, and from a different gender than the interviewer, he addresses the interviewer with respect marked by the use of the pronoun '*usted*' as a form of address; and discursive modality strategies that include the use of verbal phrases such as 'I wouldn't know what to say to you', 'I couldn't answer your questions correctly', 'I can hardly write, but for what I hear the crisis...', through which he assumes his ignorance on the *crisis* object-subject.

On the other hand, we have analyzed the imaginary formations about *the crisis* (the referent) made by the interviewees, questions asked by Pêcheux such as: "What do I talk to him about?" The general answer to this question adapted to the specific referent in this study would be "I'm talking about a situation that I'm living and that I don't understand what causes it, thus, only based on my experience I can suggest solutions..." Also, the answer refers to the establishment of contrasts between the crisis experimented 'by me as a member of a social marginal group' versus 'the experience that other groups have about the same situation'.

Thus, we state the question that has to be answered in this investigation in terms of 'How do I represent other social groups facing *the crisis* in my discourse?' Next, we illustrate the answers that we integrate with fragments of the discourse of the illiterate:

'How do I represent *Mexicans in general* in my discourse?': *The Mexican government does not protect us when we don't have a job, while the American government does. They are more fair over there, more free, and they lend money to Mexicans when the government asks for it (and what for, this has solved nothing).*

'How do I represent *the powerful ones* in my discourse?':

The president of the Republic: *we have to go to the President, La Madrid, to Mexico, with him everything will be solved;*

The governors: *they don't fulfill their campaign promises, Martinez Dominguez didn't finish paving the streets and the ones that followed haven't done anything. They don't put a stop to inflation, either.'*

The wealthy and businessmen: *the owners of Cerveceria Cuauhtemoc are very powerful, they fix everything; no way we can force employers, they also live the crisis; employers are the only ones who benefit with our work, some are found drunk and don't get their paycheck; but they are the ones that pay.*

The ones with formal education or training: *like you who are on top of everything.*

The public authorities: *policemen must watch gangsters, there must be mutual respect; electricity inspectors are too tough even with high bills and if we don't pay on time, they cut the electricity.*

'How do I represent *people in low-ranking jobs* in my discourse?':
As servants, petty clerks, errand boys, fake inspectors.

'How do I represent *the poor* in my discourse':
we are the meek, although there are people without jobs, without housing, without food. Those are the ones that need help.

'How do I represent *illiterate people* in my discourse':
my parents couldn't sent me to school, I couldn't answer your questions, I can hardly write (we exclude direct designations, illiterate or ignorant).

'How do I represent *the lazy* in my discourse':
They go and look for a job with their best shirt, not willing to find one, they say they can't find a job and they're just wasting their time.

'How do I represent *beggars* in my discourse':
Children begging for a taco in the cantinas, some to satisfy their addictions others out of necessity.

'How do I represent *farmers* in my discourse':
The United States will benefit if Mexico was part of its territory because our people is very hard-working; we can find people with higher reasoning and more honest among them.

From these results we reach the following conclusions: in the schematization of 'the powerful, the presidential figure is represented as 'able to stop the process of *crisis* by stopping inflation'; while not schematizing 'corrupt personalities covered up or protected by the government', but only mentioned them indirectly: *pure corruption / there is nothing legal right now / the one going in and the one going out, it's just the same.*

2. ARGUMENTATIVE SCHEMATIZATION

According to Grize (198?), founder of the Neuchâtel school, every time one speaks, but most of all when there is an argument, the sender schematizes the referent (what one is talking about) according to one's knowledge and experience. In this study we contrast schematizations made by subjects of a low school level about the crisis. The result of this comparison is a schematization shared by each socio-cultural group: group A, low-income illiterate people; group B, mid-level income and education individuals; and group C, university and high-income individuals. The schematization of the crisis made by the illiterate group refers to this referent as a situation it understands: in a daily experience, an imbalance in the domestic economy caused by the 'rise of prices'; in a group experience, unemployment, social disregard and the 'need for governmental help'; and at a local level, 'gangs' and overpopulation. Also, we include 'God's will' among the causal explanations of *the crisis*. There are no references in this scheme on the repercussions of *the crisis* at a regional, national

and international level, as those which appear in the schematizations of the subject made by literate individuals.

3. DISCURSIVE MODALITY INDEXES

When we approach the study of modality in Rodríguez Alfano:2004a, we try to answer questions such as the following: Do the fourteen illiterate interviewees assume their statements when thinking about the crisis? Or, do they attach to someone else the responsibility of the statements, or else do they hide behind their statements in order to present an objective view of the facts? To answer this question, we use the concept of 'distance' described by the theorists of enunciation and which refers to the attitude through which the subject presents himself in his statements or, on the other hand, through which he evades himself, so that he assumes the statement at a different level. The minimum distance corresponds to a totally assumed discourse, where the subject that enunciates is the same subject in the enunciation, since he is talking from a perspective of a 'self' whose reference is himself. Maximum distance appears in an un-assumed discourse where the subjects presents the enunciation as part of a world alien to himself, such as in the maximum distance or in the didactic discourse.

Regarding the discourse of the illiterate, the research question is: what indexes mark the discursive modality in the arguments stated by these subjects about *the crisis*? And the corresponding answer includes verbs, personal pronouns and adjectives among other markers. Next, we analyze each one of these discursive markers in the speech of the illiterate.

3.1 Statement and Opinion Verbs

Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980, p. 135) calls 'statement verbs' those that indicate a verbal behavior and whose semantic content is dominated by the archlexeme 'to say'. Kerbrat-Orecchioni adds that some include an element of 'feeling', such as *complaining* or *bemoaning*, but these differ from the *feeling* verbs in such a way that feeling is expressed through a verbal behavior. Instead of *it bothers me...*, the statement results in *I say to be bothered...* According to Foucault's proposal (1987) on the *possibility conditions of discourse*, there is a distinction between what can be and what cannot be said in a given social form, which can be appreciated in the use of an excluded discourse index of this type of verbs, as in the case of *to complain*. Our analysis shows the use of this type of verbs as one of the more relevant indicators in the discourse of the illiterate about the crisis.

[1] A₄: pos mucha gente se queja que / trabaja dos tres días / y paga mil / dos mil de pasaje / pos ya / ¿qué se ganó? /

[2] A₅: mucha gente que trabaja / se queja / pos nosotros / con más ganas ¿verdá? (...) he'stado oyendo ¿verdá? / programas así en la televisión / que / pos no sé / probablemente... / los que se quejaron / a la mejor sí / pos... / tendrán un arreglo / o esto'l'otro (...) como digo / los qu'están trabajando / se quejan amargamente / que no completan / pos uno / con más ganas ¿verdá? / tá como digo yo ¿verdá? / en mi sentido mío / pues yo... / por eso / yo no quiero / tampoco andar / este... / en televisión / o esto'l'otro / como otras personas / ¿verdá? / bueno /

pos tendrán razón / o no tendrán / no sé / ¿verdá? / ellos van con sus quejas / que... / tá mal / que les cobran esto / que les cobran allá... / y que / pos a mí / no / yo no me quejo del cobro de luz / ni del agua / porque pos toy normal orita / porque también economizo lo mío /

[3] Ag: Yo me fijo que (los jóvenes de hoy) batallan mucho / y se quejan más que uno que tiene tanta familia /

These examples of *complaining* (except [4]) were issued by male subjects. Examples [1], [2] and [3] deal with an indirect modality through which the sender tries to inform about the complaint made by *many people*, leaving doubts about his belonging to this indefinite group of individuals; and [2], the sender use of periphrasis and the denial *I don't complain for myself, but for others...*

The relation of this type of modalities with the production and reception conditions of this discourse refer to the proposals of Foucault about these conditions understood in terms of a series of procedures that exclude certain discourses and include others, making a distinction of what must be said or not said in a given social order. In this case, the semantic sense of the verb *to complain* receives a negative evaluation placed at the good/bad axis, since this verbal action is forbidden by our society: complainers are looked upon with disapproval, complaints must be silenced mainly when made against the government. A transgressor of this rule is branded negatively, and even could be socially excluded. This explains the determination of the senders to justify their complaints using several discursive strategies, including a rhetorical denial (I don't complain).

On the other hand, Ducrot (1982) defines the verbs of opinion as those used by the interlocutor to reduce or expand the distance between himself and his statements. This is when choosing a verb of opinion (I think that, I'm sure that, I believe that, I know that, I wonder if, I suspect that, I ignore, I admit that (p.234)), the sender refers implicitly to a process in which he has been intellectually involved in a great or minor degree; therefore, we can establish scales of meaning that range from the reference of a great to a less epistemic compromise according to the statement. In this sense, the resulting scale of the analysis of verbs used by the illiterate who speak about the crisis comprehends four degrees of epistemic compromise that we describe below:

FIRST DEGREE IN THE SCALE OF ADHESION: SE ME HACE QUE

The verbal formula *se me hace que* is located in the true/ false evaluation scale and presupposes a recognition of uncertainty on the part of the sender, as can be seen in the following example:

[4] A13: siguen igual / y peores se me hace / que la primera que la segunda y la tercera y / y sigue la mala administración / y sigue / llevándose / millones de pesos

Generally, this insecurity is related to the imaginary formation that the senders have of themselves, according to which they ask "Who am I to speak to him (the interlocutor) like that? And their answer shows a feature of negative appreciation that can be represented as *I don't have the authority to talk about a matter as complex as the crisis*.

SECOND DEGREE IN THE SCALE OF ADHESION: CREO QUE

Frequently, interviewers induce the emission of *creo que* when asking for the opinion of the interviewees about the crisis by asking: Whom do you think is responsible for it?, or What kind of solutions do you think can solve this problem? Therefore, the answer will frequently derive from this verbal formula to which Ducrot (1980) adjudge negative marks. According to this classification, the phrase *creo que* does not imply: a personal judgment based on the experience, nor an experience of the thing “itself”, nor an original prediction, nor certainty on the part of the speaker, and it neither models the opinions that are the result of a reflection, but we can grasp an element of “doubt” in its statement.

[5] A₂: Pos hasta que // será hasta que nos muéranos / yo creo //

[6] A₈: yo creo es por eso porque / todo dan bien caro

These examples show a meaning of belief that coincides with the proposals of Ducrot regarding negative marks. However, responding to the relative assumption that the statement is a result of a reflection, there are other uses of *I believe that*, that as a mark of modality, imply an evaluation of the crisis in which it cannot be denied, that the statement is a result of a reflective process.

[7] A₇: en cada negocio creo yo que no / no hay que haya un precio fijo porque todos estamos vendiendo a como nos da nuestra gana (...) ora como vamos no creo yo que / para mí no no vamos a poder salir / ni podremos sobre- / sobresalirle a la crisis (...) creo yo que sí podríamos sobresalir / pero aquella familia / no todos / unas familias pueden salir arriba de la crisis / (...) pero si vamos a estar gaste y gaste y gaste y gaste / pos no creo yo / también eso es lo que nos acaba a nosotros

THIRD DEGREE IN THE SCALE OF ADHESION: I THINK THAT...

According to the referent criteria that the verb implies an original statement, Ducrot gives a positive mark to “think of”; if we admit this labeling, we will accept that *I think that* has a semantic implication expressed as: *I think like this*, although this opinion is not shared by you or by most. In some cases, this mark of originality is underlined by the senders:

[8] A₇: es / lo que pienso ¿vedá? para mí en mi persona / que no podemos so- / sobrevivir / (...) 'tonces si / medio día que deje de trabajar usted es el que le hace falta a usted la mera verdad / así es ¿vedá? / pienso yo

where the expressions *for my self*, *I personally think* indicate not only a degree of certainty, but also the believe of the interlocutor in the originality of what he is expressing.

FOURTH DEGREE OF ADHESION: I AGREE / I DISAGREE

Regarding this indicator, according to the theorist of modality, it should indicate a high degree of adhesion; however, in the only appearance of the corpus under study, it appears in its negative form:

[9] A₁₃: uno no remedia nada con no estar / de acuerdo / no hay más que / limitarse para poder alcanzar a / nuestras necesidades

The influence of imaginary formations that an illiterate woman (the interviewee that speaks like that) makes of herself can be felt when she speaks to a university student, when she speaks to a university student, according to which she represents herself at a sociocultural disadvantage, and therefore without the authority to agree or disagree with the steps taken by the powerful to solve the economic crisis.

3.2 Personal Pronouns

This study will only consider the use of personal pronouns through which the sender states his personal opinion. In all of them the reference remits to the I of the sender, but the selection of one or other pronoun makes a significant difference in the expression of the respective opinions. This is, the difference established when stating an opinion from the *I* perspective or else from the *tú/usted*, of *we* or the pronoun *one*.

The I Perspective

Influenced by the interviewer, in order for the subject to state his personal point of view about the crisis, the majority of this group answers denying any knowledge of the theme (with *I don't know* or equivalent expressions), or by using *I say*, with an implicit or explicit *I*.

[10] A₁₀: I: Pos yo digo que todo sube / todo va subiendo / porque / pos les aumentan el sueldo / a la semana les au- / aumentan el mandado / o ya'umentó el mandado cuando les aumentan a ellos / y parece que no es / nada que... / va ahorrar uno porque ya le subieron el sueldo / o algo / no / porque pues ya... / viene de... / fue qu'el mandado ya subió / pos ya... / es igual / da igual la cosa / (risas) / ni más ni menos

[11] A₁₃: pero (los presidentes de la república) son los mismos / son / siguen / siguen igual / y peores se me hace / que la primera que la segunda y la tercera y / y sigue la mala administración / y siguen / llevándose / millones de pesos / y el / el / pueblo / de México digo / la nación sigue igual más / comprometida por todos lados / el extranjero y cuánto / ya ve / según oigo / poco le entiendo pero / o lo que oigo

In [11], we can see that the *I* perspective not always refers to a standpoint of the subject, since in this case the *I* implicit in *I say* refers to a self-correction. In other uses of the *I*, the judgment of the subject is located at the perspective of this pronoun, although it appears in modalities of doubt or uncertainty:

[12] A₉: Yo digo que del gobierno / ¿será'l gobierno?

However, in other interviews the introduction of the pronoun *I* assume an individual perspective from which the subject expresses his perception of the crisis:

[13] A₁: Ps yo digo porque... / som- / más y más y más / ps claro se van acabando los trabajos / o... / quiebran las empresas / se / desocupan mucha gente ¿vedá? y... / se... / va / se va escasiando el trabajo ya / es donde se acaba el trabajo / y anda mucha gente di'oquis / y tod'eso

This individualized position expresses a *subjective illusion* (Cfr. Pecheux: 1978, Maingueneau: 1976, Foucault: 1982 and 1987, and Reboul: 1980, *passim*) through which the subject believes in the originality of his appreciations of the crisis: contrary to that illusion, we admit that in every discourse exists an intertextuality; by means of this mechanism, discourses produced beforehand intertwine with the discourse of the interview. This is verified in the following TV quote:

[14] A₅: ¡Ah! digo / pos / bueno de... / lo qu'era anteriormente / la vivíamos mejor / que / digo yo po'que... / he'stado / he'stado oyendo ¿verdá? / programas así / en la televisión / que mucha gente que trabaja / se queja

In addition to the expression *I say*, we find a use of *I* through which the sender states his conviction of the uselessness of uttering an opinion:

[15] A₁₃: Pues aunque (yo) pensara lo que pensara pos ¿qué se puede hacer? / nada / nada / apenas un... / un levantamiento en... armas / a ver si así se compone o se descomponía más / sí / pero ps / desgraciadamente tiene miedo uno / el pueblo

and another use of *I* used to express a categorical judgment in a set expression (construction of referred discourse): *I don't want to know*, that the subject modifies in order to introduce a negative modality of wish, *I don't wish to know*:

[16] A₁₁: qu'es que México / está / este... / vendido con los Estados Unidos / que porque los Estados Unidos le prestó dinero al gobi- / a... / a México / ¿m? / ¿por qué? / por el gobierno / porque todos... / no lo deseo yo saber / pero / todos / tratamos / de... / de este... / de acomodarnos nosotros / ¿eh?

Only two of the subjects use the *I* perspective to express their opinions on the crisis in modalities of belief (analyzed farther on) and only one (A₇) expounds, from the *I* perspective and with certainty, the result of his analysis on the situation:

[17] A₇: y ésa es la / digo yo que es / lo que pienso ¿vedá? para mí en mi persona / que no podemos so / sobrevivir / como le digo ésos son tres progresos / son tres partes que puedo tocar yo / la vida en que vivemos orita por los / los alimentos / una / la segunda en el trabajo y la tercera pos / no se puede / la mera verdá no se puede sobresalirse ya uno / al contrario se va uno bajando más /

To sum up, most of the subjects in group A reject the use of *I* to express their judgment on the crisis and those who do reflect attitudes of insecurity evident in their refusal to evaluate the situation and by expressing opinions in modalities of doubt. Nevertheless, some of the subjects show a degree of insecurity when referring their experiences about the crisis and, also, the analysis of the same with forms that manifest a subjective illusion (*I say, I think, for me for myself*, etc.).

The We Perspective

The meaning of the pronoun *we* can be represented as “I + others.” However, it is necessary to go beyond this meaning embedded in the system of the language and define the sense given to it in a concrete enunciating situation. That is, we must define to whom the term “others” refers to and, above all, find out if the interlocutor is included among them. This is an important definition because by using *we*, it can be proved the imaginary formation that the subjects have of themselves and of their interlocutor who is represented in his social and educative difference (university student).

Benveniste explained for the first time this dual possibility of reference of an *inclusive we* represented by “I + others including you” versus an *exclusive we* represented by “I + others not including you”. In this regard, in the analysis carried out in Rodríguez Alfano:2004a, we found that the “exclusive *we*” appears in the illiterate discourse. The precise references are: a familial *we* (I + other members of my family, among whom you are not included, of course); an occupational *we* (I + other workers among whom you are not included, in your quality of student); a joint *we* (I + others living in the crisis in extreme poverty). From these two last references we may presuppose that the speaker belongs with the group of salaried workers and with the socio-economic group extremely beaten by the crisis. Therefore, we label this use of the exclusive *we* as an “economical political *we*”, considering the strong emphasis in the group identity:

[18] A₁: nomás / no fallando el trabajo / no / no tenemos crisis ¿vedá?

[19] A₈: Pos no... pos qué // pos / llevar las cosas / tomar las cosas como vienen porque pos hacer / ¿qué hacemos nosotros? / no podemos hacer nada /

[20] A₁₂: nunca hacen lo que nos prometen /

The Tú/Usted Perspective

In order to clarify the use of *tú* in the direct referred discourse, we take advantage of the valuable contribution of Voloshinov (1930, pp. 137-194), who proposes that referred discourse is the one incorporated in the enunciated discourse as an integral unit of it and it includes two main variables:

1. The *indirect discourse* incorporated in the enunciation at a thematic level. At the content sphere, it reflects an active reception on the part of the *citing subject* who, in the context of the internal language, “receives, understands and evaluates the speech of another” (p 147).

2. The *direct discourse* incorporated in the enunciation at a syntactic and expressive level reproducing the emotive-affective features of the referred discourse and reflecting a different way of "hearing" the quote:

"his speech (individual, typological, or both); his mood, not expressed in the content but in the forms of his discourse (disconnection, pauses between words, expressive intonation, etc.), his ability or incompetence to express himself, etc." (p. 160).

The direct referred discourse is one of the characteristics of oral discourse. This fact may explain that the unique use of *tú* present only in the group discourse of illiterate people is the *tú of the direct referred discourse in an expressive function*. This modality is present when the sender introduces the voice of another that addressed him (speaking to him as *tú/usted*) during a previous communicative situation: *you = I*.

[21] A₇: inspectores que estuviera unos pos / "yo doy a ochenta / aquella persona da a cien" / "pues a ver ¿tú por qué estás dando a cien? / Si el fulano de tal tá dando a tanto tú debes emparejarte porque son tarifas que ya hay / conforme a lo que viene en la Cámara de Comercio" o / o / o lo que nos manden ¿verdá? / que nos mande "tú tienes que obedecer las órdenes debido al gobierno"

In this case, *tú* represents a rhetorical function when it is introduced in a hypothetical situation built by the sender in his discourse with an argumentative purpose. However, it refers to the *I* of the sender fulfilling its expressive function.

The One Perspective

In most of the cases, the *one* appearing in the illiterate discourse is an *exclusive one*, since the interlocutor is not included in the reference. Its use includes: the canonic use of *one*, the *exclusive one of family identity* and the *one exclusive of social identity* (which includes the *one exclusive of the workers*)

Canonic Use Of One

With this designation we understand the use of *one* equal to the *I* of the sender who constitutes himself in the prototype of those expressing their opinion, judging or evaluating the crisis:

[22] A₇: Bueno el / la / la / la crisis se debe e... / se / pos hay muchas razones que... puede agarrarse uno pa (opinar sobre) la crisis que estamos viviendo

[23] A₁₂: Pos ya / está uno que no halla ni qué pensar / será... igual yo creo / a la mejor peor / pos entre más má va peor /

Exclusive one of family identity

This pronoun is used without distinction of age or gender of the illiterate and, in some cases, it refers to the parents:

[24] A₉: (Por ejemplo los recién casados / les tocó una... etapa / muy difícil) yo me fijo que batallan mucho / y se quejan más que uno que tiene tanta familia / quién sabe no / no se sabrán organizar...

the reference to *one* refers to *I, prototype of the parents of this generation*, an example of model behavior, an imaginary formation that the sender makes of himself.

Exclusive One of Social Identity

Also generally used in the discourse of this group, the pronoun *one* appears with the I of the sender as its referent and as a representative of the social group, of its way of thinking, acting or experimenting the crisis:

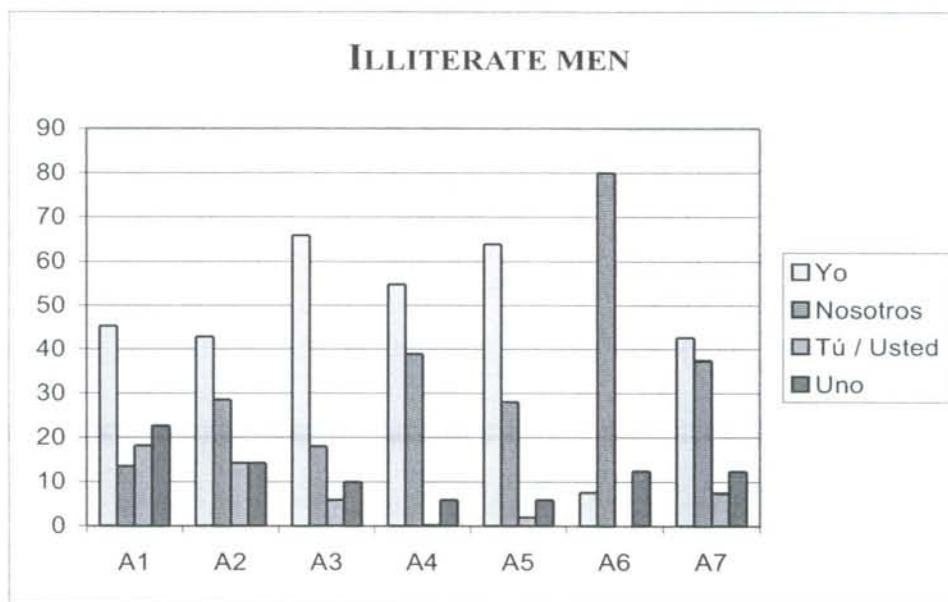
[25] A₆: se ve uno más / este... / pues digamos / ya más atrancado e'nuestro trabajo / inclusive ya / en los impuestos de... / de / de la luz / y eso / po'eso / no tenemos nada qu'echar mano aquí / (...) y ellos (los encargados de cortar el servicio de electricidad) / y ellos / como yo digo a veces / ni modo de'ecir / que s'esperen ¿veá? / no s'esperan / tiene uno que pagarles (la reinstalación) / con to' y que / venga su recibo / tan alto ¿verdá?

In these uses of *one*, in this deictic the sender represents the members of the social group more affected by the crisis. Also, within the category of the *one exclusive of social identity*, we consider another use of this deictic, whose reference remits to the salaried workers, hence designated as *one exclusive of the workers*:

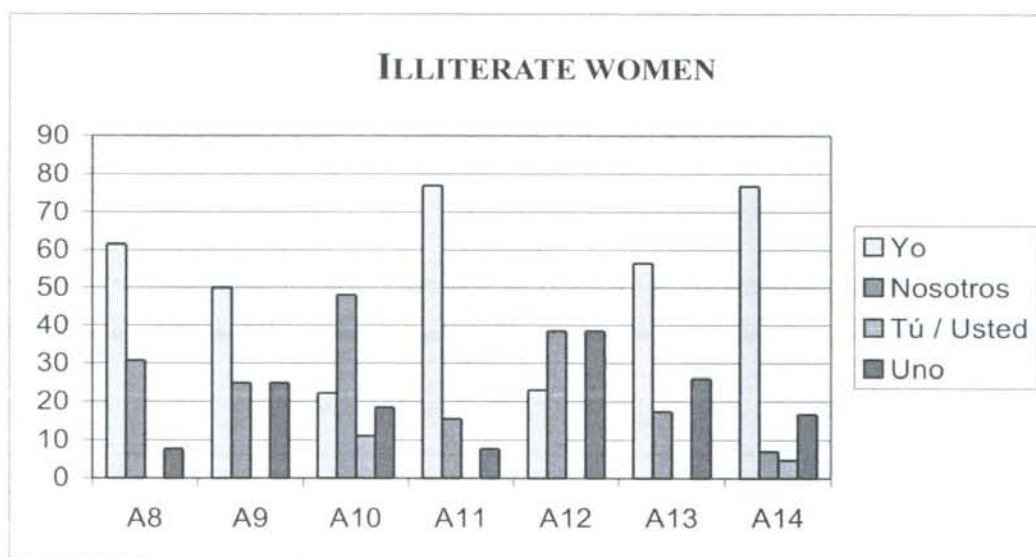
[26] A₅: si los que / como le digo / los qu'están trabajando / se quejan amargamente / que no completan / pos uno / con más ganas ¿verdá? /

This use of the *one exclusive* is relevant because when the sender turns into the prototype of the workers without a fixed salary, the discourse manifests in a certain way the worker-employer relations in Monterrey during 1985-86 when the interviews were carried out.

On the other hand, in addition to this qualitative review of the uses and references of personal pronouns, we expose next the use frequency of each one of them, differentiating the introduction of these modality indexes in the discourse of illiterate men vs. women.



Graph No. 1 Use of self-reference pronouns in the discourse of illiterate men.



Graph No. 2. Use of self-reference pronouns in the discourse of illiterate women

Considering only the numerical data illustrated in these graphs, we can verify the following with respect to each one of the self-reference pronouns:

- a. The pronoun *I* is used by 11 out of 14 interviewees
- b. 8 out of 14 subjects in this group use the pronoun in more than half of the self-references; from these, two women (A11 and A14) introduce it in more than 75% of their references of themselves when talking about *the crisis*.

Whereas in the discourse of 3 informants A (A6, A10, A12), the use of this pronoun does not reach 25%, and in the case of A6, it is not even used 10% of the total of the self-reference.

- c. The pronoun *we* is used by 9 out of 14 interviewees in a frequency higher than 25% which corresponds in a symmetric distribution with respect to *I*, *tú/usted* and *one*. On the other hand, 5 out of the 14 introduce the pronoun in their discourse 25% of the time; and in the discourse of one of them (A14), the use of the self-references does not reach 10%.
- d. The pronoun *tú/usted* is used by 8 out of 14 interviewee among which (A4) does not reach 1% on the self-reference.
- e. The pronoun *one* is used by the 14 interviewees in group A and in 3 of them (A9, A12 and A13) the frequency is higher than 25%, which will correspond in a symmetrical distribution to *I*, *we* and *tú/usted*.
- f. Usually, the four self-reference pronouns appear in the discourse of the two groups under study. However, the intergroup distribution of these pronominal uses is unequal. Above all, the use of *tú/usted* and the pronoun *one* shows marked contrasts: in comparison with 8 of the interviewees in group A, there are 11 of group B that express their opinions using *tú/usted*; and in comparison with 14 in group A, there are only 8 in group B that use the pronoun *one* when speaking about *the crisis*.

After this review of the results of the research on the speech of illiterate people, we note the following general observation: in no way can we label this language as "poor", a language that gathers the richness of oral tradition and is manifested in the wide range of its meanings, as can be seen in all the variety of the references to the pronoun *one*, just to give an example. However, by admitting this expressive richness, we must not ignore that the distinctive features of the speech of illiterate people is based on "stigmas" that label the subjects and reinforce attitudes of rejection, mainly in a working environment. That is, regarding the appreciation of a situation expressed in terms of emotional involvement

(I feel that..., I think that...), these are viewed as inferior to those that presuppose a rational comprehension effort. Thus, the economic disparity of the economic system, which place illiterate people within the group with few opportunities for social climbing, is reinforced with ideological justifications that include the rejection of their ways of talking, which are labeled as inferior to those acquired in school. This rejection is made without appreciating the validity of the uses of language that are equally expressive, but do not have the acceptance of the dominant groups in our society.

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